DePaul University

**Current Event #2:**

**US intelligence chief: we might use the internet of things to spy on you**

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US Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told the Senate this week that intelligence services could use the increased numbers and even categories of internet connected smart household devices such as your home refrigerator, washing machine or television to spy on you. “In the future, intelligence services might use the [Internet of things] for identification, surveillance, monitoring, location tracking, and targeting for recruitment, or to gain access to networks or user credentials,” Clapper said. However, Clapper did not specifically name of any intelligence agency as involved in household-device surveillance.

At the same time Clapper showed America’s intelligence chief also warned American that online threats is the primary “worldwide threat”, we are facing. Moreover, Clapper said “Russia and China continue to have the most sophisticated cyber programmers.” I think that he meant US need to have significant improvements in the online capabilities too, so use the increasingly interconnected smart household devices for surveillance is a necessary step to take.

Clapper also pointed out that the intelligence services can use the Internet of thing to target the terrorist like the member of the Islamic State (ISIS), or “homegrown extremists” such as those who conducted deadly attacks in San Bernardino and Chattanooga.

Therefore, in the future, the internet of things take as given that the US and other surveillance services will possibly intercept the signals the household devices emit, much as they do with those from cellphones, security experts examining.

Should we promote a system that not only cellphone but also household interconnected devices become surveillance devices for intelligent service spy on all American? That is the most interesting ethics issue I see in this article.

I feel uncomfortable live in a house full with surveillance devices. Every word that I say, every action that I take will be record, and there will be someone watch and analysis my recorded life. I can’t relax in this kind of environment. And I can’t believe my own house will probability become this kind of environment. However, if the benefit of using this system is away large than the problem and harm that will cause, I am willing to make some sacrifice for a greater good. Therefore, we need to know the pros and cons first.

Clapper claimed that this system will increase their surveillance capabilities. This system also can help the intelligent agencies easier and faster to find and target potential terrorist, terrorist, or “homegrown extremists” in order to protect American’s safety. This system may is an important improvement on US online capabilities. Those are the pros of this system. The cons that I see in this system, first, it violates our privacy. However, by the Fourth Amendment, the provision constitutionally guarantees “the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated” unless a warrant has been issued based “upon probable cause”. Therefore, based on the Fourth Amendment, this system should not be legal because this system targets all American without “upon probable cause”. Second, how secure this system would be? When the US intelligent agencies using this system to spy American, other country’s hacker may use this system to against America. There’s always a risk. Third, this system will positive decrease a lot of American’s happiness. I think most of people would feel uncomfortable surrounding by surveillance devices which record your images and conversation every time in their own house. Outside of house, we are surrounding by many surveillance camera. We can find surveillance cameras in public place like train station. Many office have surveillance camera too. Therefore, our privacy is so limit. Now, we need to give up our privacy in our own house too. It is positive people’s happiness will decrease tremendously.

All in all, in my point of view, we should not promote this surveillance system. First, intelligence agencies already use our cell phone to do the identification, surveillance, monitoring, location tracking and etc. This somehow already increase their surveillance capabilities. It also help them to find and target the “dangerous people”. Even we use this system, intelligence service did not show us their surveillance capabilities will have huge increase by that. Moreover, we can developed other technology aspects to improve US online capabilities. However, by using this system, the harm that I mention above will be caused definitely. Therefore, sum up the pros and cons, there are more harm than the goods.

Utilitarianism is based on the principle of utility which is an action is right or wrong to the extent that it increases or decrease the total happiness of the affected parties. The affected parties in this ethical issue are the US surveillance services and all the American. By using rule utilitarianism. The US surveillance services will be the one use household interconnect devices as surveillance devices to monitor, location track, and etc. to US people. All the American will become monitored targets. The moral rule would be I should promote and accept US intelligence use the internet of things to spy on me. The universal moral rule is every person in America should promote and accept US intelligence use the internet of things to spy on them.

The good if everyone followed, US intelligence agencies’ surveillance capabilities will increase. The chance of target territories and other dangerous people and prevent territories attack will increase. The chance of preventing huge damage will increase. US online capabilities will increase. The harm of following this rule would be all the American’s privacy will be harmed. Almost all of us didn’t do any bad thing, and we didn’t intend to do any bad thing, but we need to be monitor because one of us maybe is a potential dangerous person. No matter where we go or what we are doing, the devices will record it and someone or some system will analyze it. This is the action that is harming our privacy. Under this system, I can’t believe we still live in a freedom country. When our all actions and words will record and analyze, I can’t say I have freedom. It just like live in a huge prison. I will so worry about if I do anything or say any words that make the intelligence services think I will be a potential dangerous person, then I will end up live in a real prison. And I don’t only me but a lot of other people will have same worry.

The losing of privacy and freedom, I believe people’s happiness will have a huge decrease which cannot be cover by the good of following the rule. As result, we should not promote and accept US intelligence use the internet of things to spy on us.

Social contract theory is it is right for me to act according to a moral rule if rational people would collectively accept it as binding because of its benefits to the community. US intelligence services spay on American is an extremely serious matter because the ability to intrude on the private realm is a tremendous power that used to control, embarrass, disgrace, or ruin an individual. Because it is so invasive, I don’t think US should allow any intelligence services use household internet connected devices as surveillance device to monitor all American.

Electric surveillance by the Government is strictly limited by the Constitution. According to the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution, “The right of people to secure in their persons, house, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.” However, if we allow US intelligence services use our household internet connected devices as surveillance device, our right of secure in our house against unreasonable searches and seizures is harmed. Moreover, by using this system, the intelligence services do not need to have warrant anymore. And it harms our right too because it means they can monitor us without reason.

According United States Code Title 50, Chapter 36, Subchapter 1, Section 1809. Criminal sanctions, part a- prohibited activities, part one- engages in electronic surveillance under color of law except as authorized by statute. If the US intelligence services use the internet of things, we do not need to apply authorized by statute to monitor all American. Without processing authorization, our right can’t not protect because they can monitor anyone in anywhere with any situation.

As all I don’t thing giving up these rights for increasing intelligence’s surveillance capabilities and help them better protect American’s safety is worth. We need to have better way to solve these problems.

In Aristotle’s ethical theory, we decide what is good or bad base on the result of did we accomplish our goal or objective. The final goal of use ordinary household devices to spy on people is protect people from dangerous. By using ordinary household devices as surveillance devices will definably increase intelligence’s surveillance capabilities and US’ online capabilities because they can have data of all American’ 24 hours life every day. These data can help them better to target dangerous people or event which directly protect American’s safety. Therefore, we can say we use this system accomplish our goal, so this system is good for all American.

However, Aristotle’s ethical theory is too focus on accomplishment of the goal, and ignore the calculation of people’s happiness. By achieving this goal, we use ordinary household devices to spy on people. It harms people’s privacy and freedom which will cause people’s happiness decrease. I don’t mean our safety is not worth for us to giving up these rights, but we can find another way to achieve the same goal which is the way would not decrease major of people’s happiness. Achieving the goal is important, but using the right way to achieve the goal is important too. Therefore, I think we can’t rely on Aristotle’s ethical theory to make final decision.

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Introduction to Ethical Theories: A Procedural Approach, Douglas Birsh

-Chapter 2 Ethical Relativism

-Chapter 5 Utilitarianism

-Chapter 8 Aristotle’s Ethical Theory